

# National Fire Plan Summer 2004 Newsletter

USDA Forest Service, Department of the Interior



## National Fire Plan Newsletter

In the spirit of keeping staff and partners up on the latest NFP news, this newsletter is designed to highlight some of the hot topics in the NFP.

### Wildland Fire Leadership Council

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) held its spring meeting in Sacramento, CA on May 18, coinciding with the 2004 Small Wood Conference. The meeting kicked off with a morning discussion with stakeholders from the California Forestry Association, California Fire Safe Council, The Wilderness Society, and the Trinity County Resource Conservation District.

The spring meeting was a busy one! The council approved and signed the LANDFIRE charter, made progress toward completing a charter framework for monitoring of the 10-Year Strategy, and approved and signed the charter for a National Wildfire Enterprise Architecture Steering Group.

The meeting closed with the passing of the Chair position from Lynn Scarlett, Assistant Secretary-Policy, Management and Budget for the Department of the Interior, to Mark Rey, USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment. A complete summary of WFLC meeting decision and action items can be found on the WFLC section of [www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov)

### OTHER RECENT WFLC ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- ⌘ WFLC member agencies agreed to a common process for prioritizing hazardous fuels programs across the U.S.
- ⌘ Federal agencies expanded reporting mechanisms across the agencies to track condition class changes from activities other than hazardous fuels treatments.
- ⌘ WFLC convened a conference to examine options and research in the areas of small diameter biomass utilization.

### Strategic Panel on Fire Suppression Costs

At their fall 2003 meeting, the WFLC convened the "Strategic Panel on Fire Suppression Costs" to more closely examine the factors that drive wildland fire suppression costs. The panel plans to present their findings to the WFLC at a special August 10, 2004 meeting in Washington, D.C. When complete, the report will be posted on the NFP website - [www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov).

## NFPORS

NFPORS, the federal National Fire Plan project and accomplishments reporting system, recently developed and rolled out a new module that allows reporting on the status of hazardous fuels reduction and healthy forests projects that are funded by programs outside the National Fire Plan. We are also working with the states to include state accomplishments and projects in NFPORS to help develop a clearer picture of the landscape.



### National Fire Plan Website

[www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov)

The newly designed National Fire Plan website is close to being complete! The new website will be up and running by mid-July. The website's new features include an interactive U.S. map with up-to-date fuels accomplishments and projects. Please let us know what you think of the new design by filling out the "Contact Us" form on the website.

## LANDFIRE

The LANDFIRE charter was signed by the WFLC at its May meeting and the project is making significant progress. Agreements with The Nature Conservancy and the Student Conservation Association are approved and in place. The Nature Conservancy facilitated a very productive vegetative modeling workshop with fire, forest and ecology experts. This workshop focused on the Northern Rockies; additional vegetative modeling workshops will address other model zones.

The new LANDFIRE Project Manager has started work in Missoula, MT, and several additional positions are being added to achieve full implementation under the accelerated timeline. More information can be found at [www.landfire.gov](http://www.landfire.gov)

### New Healthy Forests Website

At the recent Forest Health Summit in Arkansas a new website was unveiled.

[www.healthyforests.gov](http://www.healthyforests.gov) is a one-stop site for information on the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). HealthyForests.gov features HFI and HFRA fact sheets, accomplishments and news.

## Congratulations, Tim!

In April, Tim Hartzell retired as the DOI Director for the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination. After an outstanding career with DOI, Tim now passes his days searching for "the big one" in pro bass fishing tournaments across the country. DOI is currently in the process of finding someone to fill Tim's shoes.

## SNAPSHOT: NFP ACRES OF HAZARDOUS FUELS TREATED

As of July 7, the FS and DOI have treated 90% of their hazardous fuels targets for 2004.

2001	2002	2003	2004*
2,089,809	2,257,482	2,712,182	2,399,000

\* Acres treated to date.

### The Relationships between the National Fire Plan, HFI and HFRA

Since the signing of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), there has been some confusion over how the National Fire Plan (NFP), Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) and HFRA fit together. Below are some thoughts from Corbin Newman, the Forest Service National Fire Plan Coordinator, on the relationships among NFP, HFI and HFRA. Hopefully, Corbin's comments will help clear the confusion!

*In September 2000, the NFP and its attendant 10-year Comprehensive Strategy established a fundamental goal - to restore and maintain fire-adapted ecosystems. No single factor was more fundamental to addressing the cause of uncharacteristically catastrophic wildfire and its impacts on the environment and communities. The NFP has been immensely successful in bringing focus, understanding, and resources to this challenge. Subsequent reports such as the "Cohesive Strategy" and GAO's 2001 review of the NFP supported and emphasized the need for the Forest Service and Department of the Interior to focus on this overarching objective in a coordinated and integrated way.*

*At about the same time, the Forest Service "Process Predicament" initiative was kicked off to identify and clear away the hurdles and barriers that had impeded the ability of the Forest Service to manage the lands under their care in a timely and effective manner. The second year of NFP implementation and the initial efforts under Process Predicament came together with the 2002 fire season to gain Presidential attention, culminating in the President's Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI).*

*In announcing the HFI, the President made clear that the purpose of the initiative was to identify and remove the barriers to our implementation of the NFP and to the restoration of the health of our nation's forests. HFI was a renewed effort to become more effective and efficient in carrying out the projects that were trying to attain the foundational goal of the NFP - restoration and maintenance of fire-adapted ecosystems. HFI was not a competing program, but an extension of the NFP and its focus on restoration treatments – including hazardous fuels.*

*HFI has been immensely successful. The effort produced new categorical exclusions that allowed us to move quickly under appropriate circumstances, streamlined our administrative review process, and created new regulations under NFP projects. It also identified a number of areas that only legislation could resolve. This led to long and extensive discussion between the administration and members of Congress. The end result of this dialogue was the passage of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act in November 2003.*

*The passage of HFRA sent a strong message of bipartisan support for the continued implementation of the National Fire Plan. Its genesis was to provide new authorities and processes that would expedite our restoration goal. As a result, the first two Titles of the Act focus on the treatment of hazardous fuels and the importance of biomass utilization to accomplishing restoration. The Act goes on to provide new authorities and programs in Watershed Assistance, Insect and Diseases, Establishment of Healthy Forest Reserves, and Inventory and Monitoring. This Act was yet another extension of our continued focus on implementing the NFP and its key goal of restoration.*

*Everyone should expect that there will be laser-like focus on getting the HFRA implemented quickly and therefore it will have a continued high profile. This, however, is not an indication of a lessened emphasis on the NFP; instead, it is an undeniable commitment to the NFP and the Comprehensive Strategy.*